

# A NEW CHURCH



THE STORY OF THE REBUILDING OF THE  
PARISH CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS,  
WESTON, BATH IN 1832

By Michael Messer

In memory of Joan Hargood-Ash  
Parish Historian

## **FORWARD**

This publication was compiled to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the rebuilding of the Parish Church of All Saints, Weston, Bath.

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance given to him by the Staff of Bath Reference Library and the City Archives Officer, Robert Bryant.

Some sections of this work have been extracted from the two parish histories, and a Church Guide written by the late Joan Hargood-Ash and now out of print. Other material, however, is published for the first time, and sheds an interesting light on the rebuilding of our Parish Church.

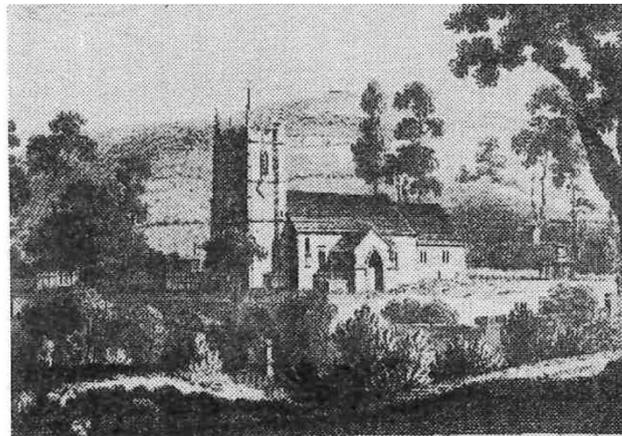
Michael Messer

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## SETTING THE SCENE

In 1832 the Electric Telegraph was invented by Samuel Morse, the much fought Reform Bill was passed on June 7<sup>th</sup> and the same year saw the deaths of Walter Scott, Jeremy Bentham, utilitarian Philosopher and writer on jurisprudence, and the German poet and thinker Johan, Wolfgang Goethe. In Weston, however, apart from the passing of the Reform Bill, the most important event of that year was probably the rebuilding of the Parish Church of All Saints.

But our story begins some years earlier, in 1826, when the Reverend John Bond, M.A. was appointed Vicar, who was to stay for the next 55 years until resigning the living in 1881.



The church that John Bond viewed on his arrival at Weston was a medieval structure built before the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and known in earlier times by the dedication of “All Hallows”. Although no church is mentioned in the Domesday survey this cannot be conclusive evidence that Weston was then without a place of worship, for churches that are known to have existed at that time are not always mentioned. The dedication “All Hallows” usually indicates a Saxon foundation. Seventy years after the Domesday survey, in 1156, a Bull of Pop Adrian, confirms the possession of land at Weston “wherein is a church”, and which is confirmed to the monastery at Bath.

Nothing remains of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Church and it may not even have been on the present site. In the last century, a Mr. Whale, a local antiquarian, believed that the first Church was on Lansdown. There is undoubtedly a record of such a building being demolished in 1551, but it is doubtful if this was Weston Church.

The Lansdown Church should not be confused with the Chapel of St. Lawrence, a fragment of which survives incorporated into Chapel Farm (opposite the Blathwayt Arms); this was the Chapel of a Hospice for pilgrims on their way to Glastonbury.

The late medieval church known as “All Hallows” was probably built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, but it is impossible to date it very exactly. The tower of this structure still remains, and an old print shows the whole church in a similar style of Perpendicular architecture. If the tower door, restored about 1834, is a copy of the old one, it is more typical of the late fifteenth century, but an old sketch shows this doorway with a pointed ogee arch similar to that of the present south porch, and this type of arch was more often used in the late fourteenth century. The sketch, however, is so roughly done and the drawing of other parts so inaccurate, that it is not really helpful.

Throughout the Middle Ages the whole of Weston was part of the property of Bath Abbey so that the Prior would have been responsible for the building of the Church. The only reference we have (apart from two wills) prior to the eighteenth century, is a survey of Chantries made in 1548 where it is stated that there is an <sup>1</sup>obit founded within the Parish Church. “One tenement with a gardyne ther callyd the churchhouse in the occupying of the wardens of the same church .... IJs.”



The tower that remains is of three stages with angle buttresses and four crocketed pinnacles. Slight projections in the battlements, based on gargoyles, originally supported four more pinnacles. These became unsafe early in the present century and were taken down. An old print shows a cock as a weather

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<sup>1</sup> Obit. A small sum of money left to a Parish Priest as a payment for prayers to be offered up each year on the anniversary of the donor's death. At Weston in 1525 Sir John Arnold left 'a ewe shepe' for this purpose.

vane, and a square faced clock. This tower was, of course, in much better proportion to the old nave and chancel than it is to the present one.

The old medieval church and its surrounding graveyard were very popular as a last resting place for many visitors and residents of Bath from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. The graveyard was finally closed for burials in 1876. Inside the old church the walls must have been completely covered with the monuments of the departed, some of which are well worthy of notice as they were replaced in the rebuilt church. With its old high 'horse-box' pews, plus a large congregation, the old church must have been crowded indeed. No wonder the Reverend John Bond decided a new church was needed for his fast growing parish.

### **THE REVEREND JOHN BOND**

In 1826 the Patron of the Living (The Lord Chancellor) bestowed the Vicarage of Weston on the Reverend John Bond, M.A., of Wadham College, Oxford. It was not by chance that John Bond came here, for his father was Rector of Tyneham, Dorset, a Prebendary of Bristol and an old friend of the Earl of Eldon, then Lord Chancellor.

John Bond must have been quite a young man when he came here and having surveyed the parish, probably had the zeal and enthusiasm of youth to want to improve his parishioners' lot. He must also have been a man of means as he was responsible for quite an amount of building during his time in Weston and gave most generously towards the rebuilding of All Saints and the building of St. John's, Lower Weston, as well as the two village schools. He also established the Men's Club and Reading Room in Church Street (now the library). The alterations he carried out to the old vicarage are recorded in great details in his original notebook which the Church still has in its archives. At the time of the Jubilee of his ministry in 1876 the parishioners presented him with a silver inkstand and an illuminated address, as well as erecting a drinking fountain outside what is now the Church hall.

In 1898 the Churchyard Cross near the steps to the south door of All Saints was erected in memory of the Reverend John Bond. It is of Ham Hill stone upon a bed of 30 tons of cement. The figure of the Good Shepherd was first moulded in clay, then taken in reverse in plaster of paris from which another plaster cast was taken, and from this mould the stone was sculptured. The memorial was designed by Mr. E. Buckle, the then Diocesan architect. The inscription, now almost illegible, reads: "To the glory of God. In grateful memory of the Reverend John Bond, M.A., Vicar of Weston, 1826-1881. This cross was dedicated at the Feast of All Saints, 1898, by his devoted parishioners and friends."



The church, that the Reverend John Bond came to, seated only 176 people. By 1800, however, the population of Weston was about 1,000 and during the next 50 years was to rise to over 3,000. When the new Vicar arrived in the parish it was said "that the village was simply the was house of Bath...only the women worked during the week, the men on Saturday when they took the baskets home, then on Monday there was a general orgy on the proceeds." Weston, then, was not a rich parish, and this is illustrated by the fact that as late as 1895 when there was an exceptionally severe winter, the then Vicar, the Reverend E. H. Hardcastle wrote in the Parish Magazine for March, "The distress has been very serious in Bath, and Weston would have been very badly off had it not been for the wives and sisters whose laundry work has saved us."

The new Vicar wasted very little time, for in the minutes of a vestry meeting held in the old church on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> March 1827 we read that it had been called "to take into consideration the propriety and best means of making an application to the Church Building Society in aid of a design to rebuild or enlarge the existing Church of the Parish". Probably because of the cost, it was decided that the old tower should be retained. It may be, that the example was set by Twerton in 1824, where a similar thing happened, and which was also a poor parish, prompted this decision. It was unanimously agreed that an early application be made to the Society, and at a subsequent meeting we find that a grant of £300 was given.

## ENTER JOHN PINCH

The architect chosen for the rebuilding was John Pinch Junior of Bath. Both he and his father are no strangers to the architectural history of Bath. John Pinch Senior started his career as a builder but went bankrupt soon after 1800 and thereafter practised as an architect and surveyor. The majority of his work is found in Bathwick and on Lansdown. John Junior eventually succeeded to his father's practice and was to continue contributing towards the architectural skyline of Bath. One of John Pinch Junior's clients was to describe him as "a very intelligent young man .... a very clever Architect in the Gothic style especially". In fact all his churches were in the Gothic style with the Greek revival influence coming out in his domestic work.

The plan that was eventually arrived at was a nave with aisles and a chancel which was so shallow that it was described by a writer in 1876 as "a sort of eastern bay for a sanctuary". The style of architecture was Perpendicular, very popular at this time for ecclesiastical, educational and public buildings.

The total cost of the new building was beyond the means of the people of Weston so an appeal was launched and the Bath Chronicle for February 12<sup>th</sup> carried the following:

*"Weston Church, near Bath. The contributions of the public towards effecting the enlargement of the above Church are respectfully solicited. The inhabitants of the village in which it is situated, unable to raise among themselves the necessary funds for accomplishing so desirable an object, are induced to hope that an appeal to the public at large for its support will not be made in vain. The sum required for the proposed alteration is estimated at £2,500 of which no more than £1,400, including £300 granted by the Incorporate Society in London, has been provided. The population, by a census recently made, amounts to Two Thousand Five Hundred and Twenty One, but of this number only One Hundred and Seventy Six can at present be accommodated in any place of Established Worship within this parish. And when this fact is known, the Inhabitants anxiously trust that the liberality of the public will enable them to carry into effect an undertaking so important to the best interests of religion and morality."*

The same information was subsequently issued as a pamphlet with the added information that “the sum of £433 has been raised by a sale of sittings”. Beneath this there then followed a list of contributions; the largest of which was £200 given by the Vicar. A Miss Drummon and W. Purlewent Esq. both gave £50. Another contributor was Thomas Leir Esq., one of the principal landowners in the parish, a member of the vestry and who was later to be most unhappy with the way that money was to be raised to pay for the rebuilding – as we shall see.

The Vicar kept a very detailed account book and the church still possesses this in its archives along with other account books relating to the rebuilding. From these books we find that some donations came from well outside the parish as there is one recorded from a Mrs Browne of Frampton, Dorset who gave the sum of £50. Even the Curate, the Reverend Edward Wilkins gave £10 10 shillings.

## **PROBLEMS**

In June 1830 the parish decided to put out to tender the various aspects of the rebuilding works. In Keene’s Bath Journal for June 28<sup>th</sup> of that year the following appears:

*“Parish of Weston, near Bath. To Builders, Etc.*

*Persons desirous of contracting for the performance of the whole or any of the several works in the Church to be rebuilt in this parish are requested to send sealed tenders for the same on or before the 10<sup>th</sup> day of July next, addressed to Mr Page, Hetling House, Bath and endorsed “Tenders for Weston Church”.*

*The names and residences of two respectable sureties must be stated on the outside of each tender, which must be delivered without any charge and free of postage.*

*The materials of the present Church are to be taken at a valuation, and must be considered in the calculations and offers to be made.*

*The drawings and specifications may be seen, and further particulars had, by applying at the office of Mr Pinch, Architect, 2 Duke Street, Bath.*

*TO THE PUBLIC. There are nearly 3000 souls in this parish, and the present Church (which is in a very dilapidated state) affords accommodation for 175.*

*The parishioners have contributed to the utmost of their abilities in and of this laudable undertaking, and yet they have to lament deficiency in their funds. They therefore most earnestly solicit assistance from those persons whom providence has blessed with the means of giving it, and who are friendly to the cause of religion.*

*Donations will be gratefully received at all the banks in Bath – June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1830.”*

When Thomas Leir read this notice he immediately put pen to paper and wrote to the Vicar asking by what authority he intended to commence demolishing the old Church. By return, and written on the back of Thomas Leir’s letter, the Vicar replied that his actions were undertaken by authority of the Vestry and the Church Building Committee.

Thomas Leir was not satisfied with this reply as he himself was a member of the Vestry and obviously felt that the Church was going to get itself into difficulties paying for the new building. Putting all his objections down on paper, he then had them printed as an open letter by John and James Keene, the proprietors of the Bath Journal. Copies were then circulated and at least one prominent Weston resident wrote to the Vicar after receiving his copy. The objections and points raised by the letter are most interesting and as it has never been quoted before in any history of the Church, it is reproduced here in full as it throws a different light on the rebuilding of All Saints.

## **LETTER TO MR PAGE**

*Dear Sir*

*As the opinions you have lately expressed amongst the rate-payers in the parish of Weston seem to be, however well intended, very ill calculated to promote the peace in which I wish to live, I shall, in the plainest way I can think of, bring the various points under consideration, by maintaining the four following positions:*

- 1. That no vote of Vestry has yet been passed to authorise the raising £1,000 by mortgage of the Church Rates.*
- 2. That the means hitherto proposed for building a new Church are most injurious to all lay property in general in the Parish, - are illegal in their operation, - and such as no man of common reflection can accede to.*

3. *That the little Church room, so much complained of, is caused more by want of the proper and usual regulations during Divine Service, than by the smallness of Church itself.*

4. *That ample and commodious Church room may be found, if the subscriptions turn out anything like what is talked of, and that there are legal and every way equitable means to be resorted to, to bring about everything required.*

*First, the only way to raise money on mortgage of the Church Rates, is by giving particular notice of a general Vestry. That the Vestry of April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1827 had some notice is true, but that it had the notice required by the Act of Parliament to raise money is, I believe, not true. Whether it had or not will be found very immaterial, I will not condescend to shelter myself under formalities; I maintain that it did not agree; that when a subscription of £1300 could be found upon paper, that it would borrow £1000; but with that good feeling and good sense which I trust will ever be found in it, it did agree that when £1300 were so raised as to be paid into the bank, (see the hand-writing of Mr Edward Wilkins and Mr Bond) and when it was found that £1000 more would complete the Church, it would again meet to vote that sum for the purpose, upon such terms as might be then thought advisable. How much is paid into the bank? What security is there that the £300 expected from London Church Building Society, will ever be paid at all? The other £300 is not a subscription: it is nothing more than an offer from certain persons to pay £25 for four sittings in the Church, which you will allow at Bathwick cost £50. What security is there for the other express condition on which alone the Vestry ever thought of borrowing, viz.: that £2300 shall complete the Church. Is there any security that £5000 will complete it? Did the sum estimated to build any Church in the neighbourhood, to build your own house in Weston, to build any thing that ever was built, turn out sufficient to complete it?*

*Second, I have just received a note from the Vicar to say, that he hopes, by the authority of the Vestry and our Church Building Committee, that all things may be in readiness to begin the pulling down of the present Church, preparatory to its being re-built, in the 13<sup>th</sup> Inst. or soon after. If there be any one recorded vote to this effect, I am unable to find it in the Vestry Book. I will, however, for a moment enter into the supposition, that the present Church is pulled down. Where is the money ready to rebuild it? I know, if those who want a new*

*Church can get it pulled down, there will be no means found to oblige the occupiers of property in the parish to rebuild it, if the food be taken from their mouths, and the beds from under their children, for the purpose. Let me advise my neighbours, as they value their daily bread, not to suffer one stone to be touched till they know positively where to lay their hands upon the sum wanted to complete rebuilding it. What man is there of common sense who really believes, that the subscriptions will furnish one quarter of the money to rebuild the large and handsome Church it is the interest of the Vicar, and the proprietors of the newly built villas, to have built? Are those who pay hardly anything themselves to be judges of what is to be taken from the pockets of those who must pay almost the whole. The Vicar, I am aware, handsomely gives £200. How any man can be found to make such proposals as have been made to the parish of Weston, in these times of almost intolerable distress, when they know that the rich parish of Walcot, adjoining, will not hear of a rate<sup>1</sup> is to me a matter of utter astonishment. Suppose we grant all you ask; what do you offer us in return? Nothing; absolutely nothing: not even a Sitting in the Church when it is built, which a resolution in the Vestry Book, in the Vicar's handwriting, March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1827, offers for sale at Seven Shillings a year. I assert, without fear of contradiction, that if the present proposals be carried into effect, the occupiers of thousands a year will not have one sitting to call their own; and yet I believe at present, before fresh expenses are incurred, my own property alone pays £150 per annum,<sup>2</sup> in Tithes and Church Rates. Where is the dignity of the Church of England? Where is the law? Where is common sense? Would a measure of this sort, if you would carry it, promote the interests of religion? Would it not rather make the Church of England and invidious contrast to the prudent Dissenters around her? The law has, however, provided a means to remedy it. I reflect with considerable satisfaction, that, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1827, a resolution appears in the Vestry Book, in my handwriting, securing convenient sittings to the principal payers in the parish. April 12<sup>th</sup>, following, is a resolution, in the Vicar's handwriting, revoking it, to which I am sorry my name is subscribed. I was, between the two resolutions, misled, as to the power of granting those sittings, by a person high in the Church. Mr bond, I suppose, was misled too. In pages 258 and 259, Vol. 1 Burn's Ecclesiastical Law,*

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<sup>1</sup> I will not answer for accuracy in this respect, I have not time to be accurate; but I am likely to be under as over the mark. My paying £100 per annum is quite sufficient for my purpose.

<sup>2</sup> Two Churches are now building in the neighbourhood, one at Walcot, the other at Lyncombe and Widcombe; another is just finished at Philip's Norton; but in neither case is the Church Rate touched.

*you will find the Bishop's power of appointing sittings: "That there be no contention in the church, that there be a prudent regard to the qualities of men, and to give precedence to such as ought to have it." I advise the payers not to advance one shilling towards the Church, till there be inserted in the Vestry Book a resolution to make a formal application to obtain this necessary – this indispensable – this everywhere but in Weston, general privilege to the families of all the principal payers in the parish. There can, I think, be no doubt of the Bishop having pleasure in granting it.*

*Third. That the Church at Weston is too small I have always admitted; but that its accommodations are so deficient as those whose interest it is to have a large church say they are, I will not, for the following reasons, admit. Thirty five years ago and Weston was then populous, there was Divine Service only once a day, the present Easter Offerings were established by Mrs Hocker, to pay for its performance twice. Till the Bishop, very recently, ordered two sermons, there was only one. At this moment any person who walks to Weston, for the Sunday's recreation of a sermon, or a public house after it, has the same chance of a seat as an occupier's family of £500 a year. The usual preference, in favour of a parishioner, till the Second Lesson, has never yet been given, notwithstanding the want of room. Whoever yet saw the Church full without strangers? Build a Church capable of holding one thousand persons and a great part of the parishioners of Weston will go to churches at Bath, as nearer their places of residence, and where there is plenty of room a great part of the year.*

*Fourth. Our best thanks are due for disinterested donations. The Society in London is founded on the best and purest principles for the support of the Church of England, but its funds are said to be very low. I myself accidentally witnessed the tardiness of its payments some years since. Let us ascertain our means – not our nominal, but our actual means – which the Vestry looked to in 1827. Let us examine well our resources. Weston has many local advantages. Her church is full of monuments, and her walls want rebuilding, less from age than from having them undermined for the profit of making vaults for the affluent dead: it will not now hold one more. Her churchyard contains countless monuments of persons in distinguished situations in life who have chosen to lay their remains there. If we build a New Church, very little additional expense will construct the most coveted sort of a grave for a great number of persons. The Churchyard, when drained, will invite strangers, as it formerly did. Those who*

*understand the subject tell me that, under proper regulations, the building of a new and commodious Church, may be made to the Minister and to the Parish, not only and expense but a profit. One circumstance, to corroborate this, I must mention. The late Mr Parker of the Crescent, is said to have paid Dr. Chapman, for a small piece of ground at the bottom of the Churchyard, £74 or £84, besides other sums for burials since. Let us examine the regulations of neighbouring churches in this respect. A Table of Fees, I am told, at the entrance to Walcot Church, apportions them between the Minister and the Parish. We may perhaps, with propriety, when these matters are looked to, borrow money on our Church Rates, and it is possible, by so doing, even lessen the Church expenses of the Parish. I have never yet heard one word said on these obvious sources of revenue.*

*These are the grounds on which I maintain my argument. I hate controversy, especially public, more than any man; but I will not incur the guilt of sitting tamely by, and suffering my own interests, those of my neighbours, (for we are all nearly in the same boat), to be so cruelly injured. Nothing but an immediate and most urgent necessity can justify our further loading those who already totter under their burdens. I will not see dissensions likely to arise between our excellent Vicar and his parishioners, without interposing to make arrangements, which will promote the fair interests of both. The real bearings of this matter ought to be clearly understood; and the parish must, in future, have its dues, like others. A few public vestries are called, and then afford very little opportunity of fair discussion. The only means I have of fully expressing my sentiments is by the painful publication of this letter; and your advertisement in this morning's paper, proves I have no time to lose.*

*I am,*

*Your obedient humble Servant*

*Thomas Leir*

*Weston, June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1830*

*To Mr. Page, Hetling House.*

## POSTSCRIPT

*The avowal of a determination, from so respectable a quarter, to pull down the old Church immediately, and your advertisement in the Bath Journal, which I say yesterday, gave me very little time to consult books till this morning. It is not, as has been said, a Free Church. Depend upon it that, of right, there are Pews belonging to the old houses. A Church Book, now in my possession, beginning with the year 1739, witnesses to whom they belong round the pulpit and Reading-desk, in consequence of their being removed in 1750, and specifies every thing to which I have ever laid claim, signed by the Vicar, Churchwarden, and principal inhabitants; though persons have taken the liberty to tell me, I have no right unless I purchase it. Pages 357 and 358, vol. 1. Burn, will show you that, in this stage of our business, you have just as much right to advertise the sale of materials, as you have those of my dwelling-house. For the sake of accuracy I enquired, how much subscription had been paid into the Bank, in consequence of our advertisements, since August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1825, to know how much of the £1300 was there, which the Vestry thought necessary to have before it was prudent to borrow; and I find eighty-five pounds seven shillings only is there now ready to take down the present Church and build a new one.*

*June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1830.*

It is easy to understand the fears of Thomas Leir. As one of the principal landowners in the parish he would have suffered financially as would all the parishioners (as he pointed out) who had to pay the Church Rate. Certainly the idea of making money out of burials might have influenced the Vestry for the plans were changed and John Pinch asked to make provision for a crypt where some people were eventually laid to rest in the spaces between the arches that support the nave of the present building. Later on, however, this policy must have changed because only a small amount of the space was ever used. Today it serves as a useful store. Bats also used to like to sleep there!

Sadly, we shall never know how the questions and problems raised by Thomas Leir resolved themselves. The Vestry Minute Books which would contain all the answers are now missing. We can only assume that some mutual agreement was reached by all parties concerned which then enabled the rebuilding to proceed.

## REBUILDING

Once work commenced on the demolition of the old Church, another place had to be found where Divine Service could be celebrated in the meantime. The National School was chosen as a suitable venue and was specially licensed for this purpose. The original 'National School' is the western end of what is now the Scout Hall in the High Street and which older parishioners will remember as the old village Infants' School.

While the old church was being demolished some of the graves were disturbed and according to one source "the Vicar greatly endeared himself to his parishioners by sitting up in the churchyard through the night to see the graves which had been uncovered were not disturbed".

It was whilst workmen were digging the foundations of the new Church that they came upon an ancient grave slab beneath the old south porch. Centuries older than other monuments it is now housed in a recess in the chancel of the present church. It is 12 inches thick and bears a raised foliated cross with the following inscription in raised Lombardic lettering of the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century.

*GALFRIDI TUMULO OSSA SUB ITSO*

*QUI FUIT ANTISTES H DV FUIT IPSE SUPSTES*

This was translated by the late Dean Armitage Robinson:

*BENEATH THIS TOMB LIE THE BONES OF GEOFFREY*

*WHO WAS THE PARISH PRIEST HERE WHILE YET HE LIVED*

Other authorities, however, do not agree with this translation. The late Canon Spurrell wrote to the Record Office concerning it and in the letter he received in reply it was stated that the writer has never known the word 'antistes' used of anyone but an Abbot or Bishop. There was a Godfrey, Bishop of Bath, 1125-1135, and in an entry in the Abbey charters commemorating benefactors there is a reference to this Bishop as 'Galfridus Episcopus Bathoniensis'. This Godfrey is said to have been buried in Bath Abbey, but at the date of his death the Norman Abbey was unfinished, and it seems possible that he was buried at Weston, one of the Abbey manors, possibly with the intention that his body should be later transferred to Bath Abbey. We have no reference to a Geoffrey

as a Parish priest, and the tomb slab seems of too elaborate character to be that of a Vicar of so small a parish as Weston then was.

By August 7<sup>th</sup>, 1830, work had progressed enough to enable the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Dr. Law, to visit Weston to lay the foundation stone of the new Church. In the Church archives is a letter from the Bishop:

*Rev. Sir,*

*On Saturday August the 7<sup>th</sup>, I will D.V. be with you to breakfast at a little after 9 o'clock and will be ready for the Ceremony, at any time most convenient to the parties. If I hear nothing to the contrary, you may depend, D.V. upon my being punctual to the time mentioned – and remain*

*Rev. Sir*

*Faithfully Yours*

*Geo. H. Bath and Wells*

*Palace Wells*

*July 25<sup>th</sup> 1830*

The laying of the foundation stone was a great day for Weston, coming as it did only two months after the accession of William IV. To celebrate this important event a procession through the village took place, starting at the National School and no doubt wound its way down the High Street. It must have been quite a sight for the people of Weston and a most impressive show as can be seen from the Order of Procession which was reported in a Bath newspaper.

**PROCESSION**  
 from the  
 National School to the Church  
 for the  
 Laying of the Foundation Stone  
 August 7th, 1830  
  
 TWO CONSTABLES  
 with staves  
 GENTLEMEN OF THE PARISH  
 two and two  
 MR. PINCH (Architect)      MR. PINCH (Junior)  
 with plans                      with measuring rod  
  
 THE BUILDERS  
 MESSRS. AUST, SEWARD and VINCENT  
 bearing the mallet, plumb rule level and square  
 to be used by the Bishop  
 TWO MASONS  
 TWO CARPENTERS  
 TWO PLASTERERS  
 in clean dresses and white aprons  
 THE WAYWARDENS  
 THE OVERSEERS  
 THE CHURCHWARDENS  
 with wands  
 Two Constables                      Two Constables  
 The Rev. W. WILKINS              THE VICAR  
 Curate  
 THE LORD BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE  
 Clergy resident in Bath and vicinity  
 CLERK OF THE PARISH  
 TWELVE CHARITY BOYS  
 TWELVE CHARITY GIRLS  
 headed by their Master  
 TWO CONSTABLES

The following Monday, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1830, Keene's Bath Journal was able to report:

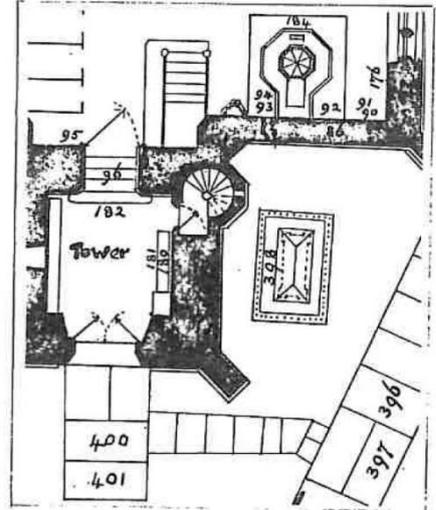
*Weston New Church – Saturday morning, at eleven o'clock, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, the Rector of the Parish, the Reverend Mr. Bond, the Curate, and all the gentry and inhabitants attended for the purpose of laying the foundation stone of the intended new church at Weston. The consecration service was impressively read by his lordship, after which the hundredth psalm was sung by the children of the National School. A great many persons from the city attended to witness the interesting ceremony. Messrs. Aust and Seward are the builders. The church is to be erected on the site of the present one, and the old tower will remain.*

Following tradition, coins were placed beneath the foundation stone and according to the Vicar's account book, these amounted to 9s in value.

The many monuments which must have covered the walls of the old Church were all carefully taken down and later refitted in the new Church, the cost of this operation being £51. 16s. 0d.

The memorials in All Saints Church and its surrounding graveyard were quite an attraction for visitors to Bath in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In his 'Walks Through Bath' published in 1819, Pierce Egan writes:

*The Church is a small erection; but the numerous monuments in its Burying-Ground are highly attractive and interesting, the principal part of which are enclosed in iron rails; most of the inscriptions are cut upon a black ground, with the letters gilt, and the ornaments are of gold.*

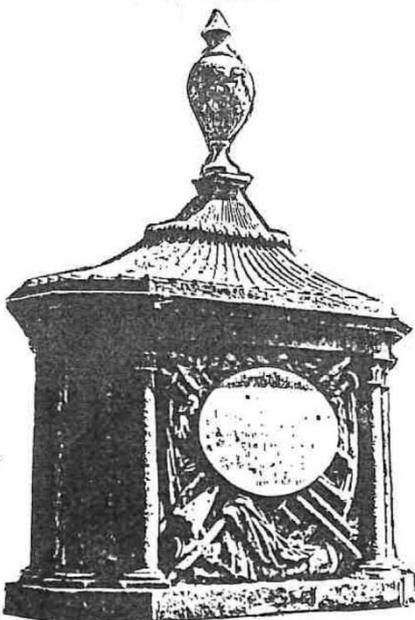


In 1799 Jane Austen discovered Weston and was able to write:

*"We walked to Weston last evening and liked it very much."*

In 1801 Jane went walking once again to Weston with a friend called Mrs. Chamberlayne. She wrote:

*"It would have amused you to see our progress. We went up by Sion Hill, and returned across the fields...., we posted away under a fine hot sun.... stopping for nothing, and crossing the churchyard at Weston with as much expedition as if we were afraid to be buried alive."*



## A NEW CHURCH

In just under two years the New Church was completed and on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1832, Bishop Law (who laid the foundation stone) paid a return visit to consecrate the new church. Keene's Bath Journal for June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1832 was able to give a full report of the event:

*“Consecration of Weston Church – On Friday last, the chaste and beautiful edifice erected on the site of the Old Church of Weston, was consecrated to Divine worship by the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells (as required by the wording of the Act of Parliament under which it was built); on which occasion the church was filled by a highly respectable congregation, assembled to witness the solemn and interesting ceremony. At 11 o'clock, the Bishop entered the west door, followed by upwards of twenty of the neighbouring Clergy, reading alternately the verses of the 24<sup>th</sup> Psalm. The prayers were read by Reverend Mr. Bond, Vicar of the Parish, and the Communion Service by the Bishop assisted by the Reverend Prebendary Vanbrugh, who officiated as Chaplain, and the Reverend the Rector of Bath as Surrogate. After the Consecration, his Lordship delivered a discourse from Lev.xix, 30, v. “Ye shall keep my sanctuary: I am the Lord.” In which having, in a few preliminary observations, adduced as proof of the existence of God, the universal acknowledgment and worship of a Supreme Being in all parts of the world whether barbarous or civilised, he pointed out, in forcible language, the high and important duty of attending religious worship. Of this, he brought in numerous instances of human experience showing that the Divine blessing always attended the propagation of the Gospel, and that portion of the Community who attended their religious duties were the best members of Society, and in their happiness and worldly comforts, shewed a marked contrast with those on whom religion has not been allowed to have its due influence. Hence the Importance of building and consecrating to Divine Worship, suitable structures. For though neither churches or religious ceremonies were of any worth to the Christian, without a heart disposed in humility and gratitude to the service of God, still it does not follow that they are not of high importance.*

*Without the observation of the Sabbath, and setting apart places for the worship of God, religion would have been lost sight of. They are to be regarded*



*therefore as important in giving us the means of instruction by the precept and example of pastors, and it then remains Christian to enter into the spirit of worship, and apply it to his spiritual improvement. This discourse appeared seriously to impress the congregation and the solemnity and instruction of the whole service gave every satisfaction. The collection at the doors amounted to £53. The music, consisting of Handel's anthem, "Lift up your Heads", the Hundredth Psalm, and the "Hallelujah Chorus" was executed in a manner that reflects great credit upon the choir of the parish, by whom it was performed.*

*The church is entirely new, with the exception of the tower, which formed a part of the old building, and which, from want of sufficient funds, the parishioners have found themselves obliged to retain, notwithstanding that its disproportion to the new part of the whole. The style is of the latest or perpendicular English. Two rows of beautifully proportioned pillars support a richly embossed ceiling, painted oak. At the east end, the painted window, executed by Mr. Stephenson, contains the armorial bearings of the royal patron of the living, the Abbey of Bath as the ancient patron; the Bishop, the Vicar, and four of the principal proprietors being contributors, and reflected very high credit upon the taste and skill of Mr. Pinch the architect. Its interior is judiciously fitted up so as to economise the room. The carpenter's work was*

*done by Mr. Seward. The pulpits are exceeding elegant, after the style of St. Saviour's, Walcot. Mr. Jones who did the carving department, presented a beautiful carved King's Arms, which appear in front of the choir. Messrs. Perry and Row were the painters – Duncan, Esq. presented an elegantly carved font. The old church would contain no more than 175 persons, while the new one calculated to hold 600.*

*We are authorised to state that the report again industriously circulated, that the Lord Bishop stipulated for a sum of money to be paid to him at the consecration of this church, is without the slightest foundation.”*

The east window mentioned in the Journal report was later enlarged when the church was extended in 1893. What happened to the heraldic glass is not known.

The two pulpits referred to, were placed either side of the chancel arch and appear in an early photograph of the church interior. It's probable that one of them was used as a lectern.

The Royal Arms on the front of the West Gallery are those of King William IV in whose reign the church was rebuilt. They differ from those of Queen Victoria by having a small shield with the Hanoverian Arms superimposed on the larger one. Mr. J. Jones, who was responsible for this work was a parishioner. He may well be the same Mr. Jones who restored the great oak west doors of Bath Abbey, which were restored at this time.

The western gallery was originally used to house the choir. In 1896 a writer who had visited All Saints noted that “this is the only church I have yet visited which retained at the front of it a cushioned desk for the parish clerk who joined sonorously in the responses, gave out the hymns and started them by reading the first line”. Later on when an organ was presented to the church it was placed in the gallery. The present organ was installed to replace the small organ in the west gallery which was disposed of.

When completed the Church had different seating from what we see today. The original pews were high with doors. The present panelling of the nave is the wood from these pews.

It was not until March, 1834 that the Committee appointed by the Vestry to carry out the rebuilding “having finished their labours and discharged the several claims upon the Parish arising from the said work beg leave to lay before the general Vestry the following report of their proceedings”. In the report it was stated that after the Committee had discharged all claims made upon them they had in hand a balance of £35.5s.10 ½d., even though various extras had to be paid for that were not in the original estimate, including the addition of a crypt. Mr. Pinch received 3140. The cost of books, hangings, window blinds, hassocks, Communion carpet and cloth was £38.

And do the New Church was completed and a larger building was now available for parishioners. It was a building that was not to stay unaltered for long, for by the 1890's plans had been drawn up for the addition of the clergy vestry and the enlarged choir vestry in 1909 the church has remained structurally unaltered.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century ‘The Original Bath Guide’ described Weston thus:

*“The church was rebuilt in 1847, except its late Perpendicular tower, and very ugly it is; the churchyard, however, contains many interesting monuments.”*

Whether the people of Weston were annoyed at these inaccurate facts is not known, but more probably they were very happy because, after all, they had a “New Church”!

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